VISION IRELAND OPENS 2ND STORE

By Liam Timmins

An official launch was held on St. Michael's Square as the NCSI charity shop rebranded its storefront, reflecting its governing bodies new brand identity 'Vision Ireland'.

The opening was held the same day of the official rebrand of the National Council for the Blind of Ireland. Now Vision Ireland, the charity hopes to clarify they provide services for those with all forms of visual impairment.

Currently they offer independent living and mobility training, assistive technology advice for the blind, emotional support for families and individuals suffering from sight-loss, employment advice, libraries of braille and audiobooks, and more.

Vision Ireland operate the second largest chain of charity shops, with 120 across the country. Profits from the outlets help provide vital services to over 8,000 people each year.

The Ballinasloe store is the second nationally to rebrand under the new title, featuring a brand-new facelift with new lighting and painting. Since its relocation from Society Street to St. Michaels Square in 2018, the former NCBI store has been transformed to rock a modern finish coated in a sleek black.

Similar to other Vision Ireland retailers, they offer second-hand clothing and products to clientele. Included in their broad range of stock are household items and furniture, along with clothing from top brands Louise Kennedy, Michael Kors, Tommy Hilfiger, and Ralph Lauren.

Exclusive to the Ballinasloe outlet are some vintage apparel dating from 20 to 30 years old, defined by the quality colours and textures of their time.

Currently Barbara Coakley manages the establishment alongside eleven busy staff. The team comprises of some long-time employees, workers on Galway Rural Development schemes, students from the nearby secondary schools, and volunteers.

"I always say there is no I in team, we always have each other's backs. We work hard, but we have fun" Barbara explains.

"We learn an awful lot from each other. One person might be very good at presentation, one person may be very good at sales, another might be very good at cleaning. It is a great team effort" she states.

Senator Aisling Dolan officially cut the ribbon on the Vision Ireland premises while Father Garvey gave a reading and blessing. Local acoustic singer Ciara Lawless serenaded an audience with her own concert, performing a melody of songs to mark the occasion.

Area Manager for Vision Ireland Carmel McDonnel was overwhelmed with launch sharing: "It will take a while to come down from the high of opening this store, but that won't stop us from getting to work to make sure that we continue to provide the people of Ballinasloe with the best pre-loved and vintage clothing on the market in Ireland. "

The Vision Ireland store is open each day Monday to Saturday from 9:00 to 17:30. The team are always looking for volunteers, with the benefits of choose days and hours which suit.

Donations can be made on the Vision Ireland website at vi.ie. Gifts and items of all nature are also welcome, whether clothing, furnishings, household items or more. The store can be contacted by phone at (087) 410 1998.

Left to Right: Kimberley Goddard (volunteer), Aisling Dolan (Senator), Barbara Coakley (store manager), James (CE scheme), Nancy Mulvihill (volunteer), Chloe Ward (student) Ardscoil Mhuire, Ballinasloe.

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